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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 HAVANA 000510

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SUBJECT: LIVING AND SEEING LIFE IN CUBA DIFFERENTLY: A
LOOK AT USINT'S IMMIGRANT VISA AND REFUGEE APPLICANTS

Classified By: Chief of Mission Jonathan Farrar for Reason 1.4 D.

11. (C) SUMMARY. A non-scientific survey of the U.S. Interest Section's (USINT) immigrant visa and refugee populations demonstrates the strong role Cuba's struggling economy and the desire of Cubans to reunite with family play in motivating Cubans to immigrate legally to the United States. The results of the survey confirm much of what we already knew regarding the differences in the type of applicant requesting refugee status versus an immigrant visa. Refugee applicants tend to have lower incomes; higher rates of unemployment; less access to higher education; fewer relatives in the United States; and less access to hard currency, the internet, and cell phones. The survey also demonstrates the large role played by economic conditions (even more so than Cuban politics) in motivating Cubans applying for immigrant visas to emigrate legally. Both groups were highly negative regarding current economic conditions and refugee applicants tended to hold even more negative views about future economic performance. See paragraph 14 for the original survey questions (translated) and raw results. END SUMMARY

Methodology

12. (SBU) USINT surveyed 247 adult immigrant visa (IV) and 100 refugee applicants on economic and political conditions in Cuba. The population comprised of Cubans from all 14 provinces and the Isla de la Juventud, although 51.3 percent of respondents were from Havana City or Havana Province. All respondents voluntarily participated in the survey, completed the survey without the assistance of USINT staff, and were informed that the survey was anonymous, voluntary, and unrelated to the applicant's immigration case. The survey was not scientific and the population is not representative of the greater Cuba public. In addition, a minority of applicants may have responded according to perceived expectations rather than actual circumstances.

Demographics

13. (SBU) Demographics for the respondents varied significantly depending on the applicant pool. Although gender was fairly evenly split in the overall population (51

percent female vs. 49 percent male), IV applicants were mostly female (57 percent) and refugee applicants were overwhelmingly male (68 percent). IV applicants also had greater access to higher education. Nineteen percent of IV applicants surveyed were university educated while only two percent of refugee applicants had a university degree.

¶4. (SBU) Respondents averaged a monthly income of 369.10 pesos (25 pesos = 1 USD) although IV applicants tended to have higher incomes. IV respondents averaged 384.83 pesos monthly whereas refugee respondents averaged 259.05 pesos monthly. Overall, survey respondents reported a 35 percent unemployment rate with another 16 percent claiming self-employment. Refugee applicants were overwhelmingly outside of the official economy as 73 percent claimed to be unemployed (47 percent) or self-employed (26 percent). Nearly 43 percent of IV applicants claimed to be either unemployed (31 percent) or self-employed (12 percent). These figures are in sharp contrast with the Cuban government's official nationwide unemployment rate of 1.6 percent and self-employment rate of 2.8 percent.

Motivating Factors

¶5. (C) Overwhelmingly, applicants appear motivated to leave Cuba due to economic and family reasons. When asked "What are the main reasons YOU want to leave Cuba", the majority of applicants said "family," although the survey revealed significant differences between IV and refugee applicants. Nearly 93 percent of IV applicants included family as one of

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their reasons to leave Cuba, while only 15 percent of refugee applicants listed family. Applicants were allowed to respond to all answers that applied, and of the 247 IV applicants surveyed, 32 percent said economics and 11 percent said politics were motivating factors. On the refugee side, 69 percent said politics and 22 percent said economics served as motivating factors. COMMENT: Applicants were allowed to write in answers which comprised four percent of total responses for IV applicants and 11 percent of total responses for refugee applicants. The majority of write-ins listed "religious freedom" as a motivating factor to leave Cuba. Post believes the actual number of applicants emigrating for religious reasons is likely higher than reported for both groups since the survey did not include "religious freedom" as one of the listed responses. END COMMENT.

¶6. (SBU) The survey found agreement between the two groups on the desire of OTHERS to leave Cuba. Of all survey respondents, over 95 percent said the desire to leave Cuba is "very widespread" or "somewhat widespread." Less than five percent of all respondents believed the desire to leave Cuba is "not widespread." Survey respondents also believe that Cubans are generally well informed of legal emigration options to the United States. IV applicants appear to think Cubans are slightly better informed about these options than do refugee applicants. The primary reason listed by both groups of applicants combined as a motivation for others departing Cuba was "economics." However, IV applicants and refugee applicants responded differently. Seventy-nine percent of IV respondents believe a principal factor behind emigration is economic. Fifty-five percent of IV respondents said that others are motivated by family and 25 percent said that others are motive by politics. Sixty-two percent of refugee respondents reported that politics is a primary motivating factor, 60 percent said others are motivated by economics and 33 percent said others are motivated by family.

COMMENT: The survey examined both why the individual applicant wanted to leave Cuba and why the applicant believed others want to emigrate in order to provide a more informative response on the true motivations of Cubans. Although the survey was voluntary and anonymous, applicants were still keenly aware that their interview and immigration

claim was based on family reunification (in the case of IV applicants) or political persecution (in the case of refugee applicants). As a result, asking the same question in the context of "other Cubans" may provide a more useful response as to why the broader population wants to leave Cuba. END COMMENT.

Economic Conditions

¶17. (SBU) Next, the survey examined applicants' opinions on economic conditions in Cuba. The survey asked, "Have economic conditions in Cuba improved over the past year?" When examining both groups, 37 percent of all respondents said the economy is "significantly worse" and 37 percent said the economy is a "little worse." However, the individual responses revealed significant differences between IV and refugee applicant opinions. Sixty-three percent of refugee applicants view the economy as "significantly worse" while only 27 percent of IV applicants believe the same. Among refugee applicants, 27 percent view the economy as a "little worse" and 9 percent said the economy is "the same." Only 1 percent of all refugee applicants said the economy is "a little better" than a year ago and zero believe the economy is "significantly better." IV applicants are slightly more positive on the economy with 8 percent indicating that economic conditions are "a little better" and 23 percent saying the economy is the same. However, the plurality (42 percent) of IV respondents said economic performance has been "a little worse" over the past year.

¶18. (SBU) Responses to the question, "How do you expect economic conditions will change in the coming year" almost mirrored responses to the previous question for both groups. The only difference is that IV applicants are slightly more likely to believe the economy will be "the same" (35 percent vs. 23 percent for the previous question) rather than a

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"little worse" (30 percent vs. 42 percent for the previous question) in the coming year. From the entire survey population, 35.2 percent expect the economy will be "significantly worse." 29.2 percent said the economy will be a "little worse," 28.3 percent said "the same," 6.6 percent said a "little better" and 0.6 percent said "significantly better."

Shortages

¶19. (SBU) According to responses from the survey, Cubans have experienced wide-ranging shortages over the past year. In total, 294 of 336 respondents (or 87.5 percent) said their community had experienced a major shortage (water, food, electricity, transportation) over the past year. Among these respondents, 19.3 percent indicated that their community was currently experiencing a shortage. Only 2.1 percent of refugee applicants said that they have not experienced a major shortage in the past year while 16.7 percent of IV applicants said the same.

Remittances

¶10. (SBU) The survey also examined salary and financial assistance from abroad. For both groups, only 15 percent of surveyed applicants said that their salary was "adequate" or "more than adequate." Refugee applicants were more likely than IV applicants to find their salary inadequate. Sixty percent of refugee applicants reported that their salary was "extremely inadequate" and another 34 percent said that their salary was "inadequate." Whereas, 29 percent of IV applicants said their salary was "extremely inadequate" and

53 percent reported their salaries as "inadequate."

¶11. (SBU) When asked if the applicant received help outside of Cuba, 74.4 percent of all applicants said "yes." IV applicants were significantly more likely than refugee applicants to report receiving outside assistance. Eighty-eight percent of IV applicants said "yes" while only 37 percent of refugee applicants said "yes." Of the IV respondents who reported receiving assistance, 79.7 percent view this assistance as "essential" (48.1 percent) or "very important" (31.6 percent) in meeting day-to-day financial needs. Of refugee applicants receiving remittances, 75 percent believe the assistance is "essential" (53.1 percent) or "very important" (21.9 percent). An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (88 percent) believe that outside remittances are "essential" (49.3 percent) or "very important" (33.2 percent) to life in Cuba whether or not the respondent receives remittances. Just one percent of all applicants surveyed responded that financial assistance from abroad is not important in the communities where they live.

Internet, Cell Phones, and Radio Marti

¶12. (SBU) The survey also examined Cubans' access to the internet and cell phones and listenership to Radio Marti. Only 19.3 percent of respondents said that they owned a cell phone and only 5.3 percent said that they had access to the internet at home. Refugee applicants were less likely to have access to both; only 6.1 percent said they owned a cell phone and zero had access to the internet. Of the entire survey population, 27 percent of respondents believe that "many" people in Cuba listen to Radio Marti. Additionally, 50 percent of respondents believe Radio Marti is a "very trustworthy" news source. However, refugee applicants were considerably more likely than IV applicants to believe people receive news from Radio Marti and to consider it a "very trustworthy" news source. Of refugee applicants surveyed on Radio Marti listenership, 54 percent said "many," 29 percent said "some," six percent said "a few," and 11 percent said "hardly any." Of IV applicants surveyed, 27 percent said "many," 33 percent said "some," 17 percent said "a few" and 27 percent said "hardly any." 88.2 percent of refugee survey

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respondents said Radio Marti is a "very trustworthy" news source while only 33 percent of IV applicants believe that Radio Marti is a very trusty news source. Sixty-one percent of IV respondents said "somewhat" and six percent said "not at all."

Combined Results

¶14. (SBU) Survey questions and combined raw results:

¶1. What is the main reason you have decided to leave Cuba?

Politics: 27.7 percent

Economics: 29.1 percent

Family: 70.3 percent

Other: 4.0 percent

NOTE: Applicants were allowed to mark all responses that applied.

¶2. In your opinion, how widespread is the desire of others in your community to leave Cuba?

Very Widespread: 59.7 percent

Somewhat widespread: 35.7 percent

Not widespread: 4.6 percent

¶3. In your opinion, what is the main reason others in your community want to leave Cuba?

Politics: 34.4 percent

Economics: 73.5 percent

Family: 48.7 percent

Other: 2.6 percent

NOTE: Applicants were allowed to mark all responses that applied.

¶4. How well informed are people in your community about legal migration opportunities to the United States?

Very well informed: 25.2 percent

Somewhat well informed: 46.8 percent

Not well informed: 28.0 percent

¶5. How have economic conditions changed in Cuba in the past year?

Significantly better: 0.6 percent

A little better: 5.7 percent

Stayed the same: 19.1 percent

A little worse: 37.6 percent

Significantly worse: 37.0 percent

¶6. How do you expect economic conditions in Cuba to change in the coming year?

Significantly better: 0.6 percent

A little better: 6.6 percent

Stayed the same: 28.3 percent

A little worse: 29.2 percent

Significantly worse: 35.2 percent

¶7. Have you experienced any major shortages in your community over the past year?

Yes: 87.5 percent

No: 12.5 percent

Currently: 19.3 percent (of respondents who said yes)

¶8. How would you describe your salary in meeting your daily needs?

More than adequate: 0.6 percent

Adequate: 13.9 percent

Inadequate: 47.5 percent

Extremely inadequate: 38.0 percent

¶9. Do you receive financial support from family outside Cuba?

Yes: 74.4 percent

No: 25.6 percent

¶10. What percentage of people in your community receives support from family outside Cuba?

More than half: 22.0 percent

About one third: 19.7 percent

About one forth: 17.7 percent

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Less than one forth: 33.1 percent

Other: 7.5 percent

¶11. Do you have internet access at home?

Yes: 5.3 percent

No: 94.7 percent

¶12. Do you have a cell phone?

Yes: 19.2 percent

No: 80.8 percent

¶13. How many people in Cuba would you estimate listen to Radio Marti?

Many: 27.5 percent

Some: 32.9 percent

Few: 17.3 percent

Hardly anyone: 22.4 percent

¶14. How trustworthy of a news source is Radio Marti?

Very: 49.6 percent

Somewhat: 46.0 percent

Not at all: 4.4 percent

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